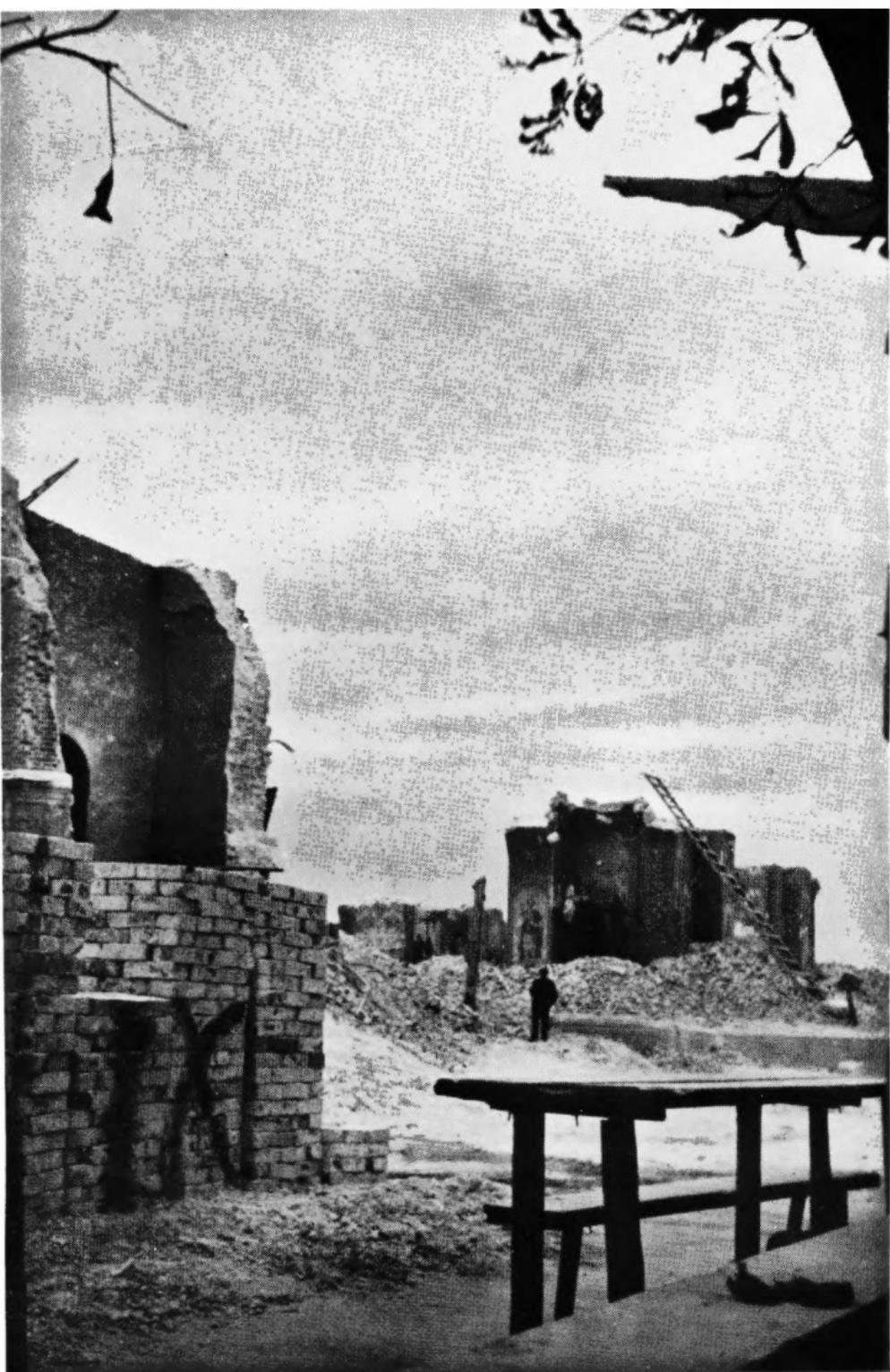


BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE FEET OF THE YOUNG MEN
(IN COLLABORATION)
PULPITS AND PERSONALITIES
THE PEACEMAKERS
CECIL RHODES



A DEMOLISHED CHURCH AT ROSTOV-ON-DON

BABEL VISITED

A Churchman in Soviet
Russia

By

J. G. LOCKHART
(The Janitor)



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THIS book expands a series of articles which I was asked to contribute last autumn to the *Church Times*. It was not my original intention to allow them to appear in volume form, but in response to numerous requests I consented. I have accordingly revised them, adding a new chapter and a good deal of fresh material which, for reasons of space, I was unable to include in the original articles.

J. G. LOCKHART.

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CHAPTER ONE

BABEL REBUILT

IN the eleventh chapter of Genesis we read that men, having acquired a measure of control over Nature, decided to build a city, and a tower whose top would reach to Heaven. The product of this ambition was named Babel, its fate is notorious, and its example, even if we dismiss the story as an allegory, has a message for the world to-day. In Russia, during the last fifteen years, we have witnessed the experiment of a purely materialist society, a modern Babel, without spiritual foundations, pushing its pinnacles upwards to a Godless heaven. The experiment has naturally attracted the interest of the outside world, the more so since the reports of its progress which filter through the frontiers of Russia

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are widely divergent. To some it appears as a genuine anticipation of Utopia; to others it is a realistic manifestation of an earthly hell.

During 1932, visitors, encouraged by a sedulous propaganda, travelled to Russia from the United Kingdom in considerable numbers. They went, they saw, and they disagreed. Most of these visitors, however—if we eliminate those who went out of pure curiosity—had certain professional objects or qualifications. They were scientists, doctors, economists, politicians, manufacturers, journalists, educational experts, farmers. They wore the spectacles of their calling; that is to say, they formed their opinions, in the main, by reference to their own particular interests: if they were economists, by the progress or failure of the planned economy known as the Five Year Plan; if educationalists, by the number and efficiency of the schools; if farmers, by the productivity or otherwise of a collectivized countryside.

Their conclusions were often very interest-

ing, but never very conclusive and frequently very contradictory. Something, in fact, seemed to be wrong in the method of approach. It is exceedingly difficult to separate the strands of this new society. Politics, economics, religion, and social life are so intimately connected that it is almost impossible to isolate one of the four to the exclusion of the others. But an even greater difficulty baffles the attempts of those who try to observe Russia in sections. Nearly everyone who has recorded his impressions of Russia has approached the task from a material standpoint, and has drawn his conclusions from what he has *seen*. That method is practically forced upon the visitor, but has obvious drawbacks in a country the size of Russia, where it is possible for two people to make rapid journeys and to see totally different things in different places. It is said that Mr. George Bernard Shaw, on returning from Russia, declared that his fellow-traveller, Lady Astor, disbelieved not only everything

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she heard, but almost everything she saw. In this my sympathies are with Lady Astor. In no country I have visited is it harder to arrive at the truth, because both within and without it everyone is anxious to inoculate the enquirer with a point of view. The visitor therefore very soon begins to distrust what he is told ; he often ends with an almost equal distrust of what he is shown. Is it typical or is it exceptional ? Is it normal or is it something especially prepared for his edification ? Yet the evidence of his eyes is better than any other sort of evidence, and in his perplexity he probably decides to abide by it. Unwittingly, by so doing, he accepts one of the first premises of the Communists, to whom the things seen are all-important, while the things unseen have no substantial existence. The moment he reaches Russia, he is haled off on a dizzy round of factories, farms, schools, *crèches*, new workmen's houses, and so forth. If he finds them good, then surely Bolshevism is good ; and even if he

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does not find them wholly good, they are sufficient evidence of progress and energy to win from him a qualified approval.

This method, however inevitable, is bound to mislead. The significance of Bolshevism lies in the fact that it is the biggest consistent attempt in history to apply a complete philosophy to government. It follows that the philosophy is more important than its manifestations, the interest of which is proportionate to the degree in which they interpret the philosophy. Far more relevant than the success or failure of what Bolshevism has done is the creed which is the driving force behind the movement. The issue, in fact, is at bottom neither political nor economic, but spiritual; and to reach it we must break through the intervening crust.

I cannot claim for myself any particular qualifications for this task. I have made no intensive study of Marxism. My visit to Russia was as brief as the visits of most of my predecessors who have written books or

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articles, and if I saw no less than they, I probably saw no more. But while many of them have, as it were, introduced themselves under some such label as "scientist", "doctor", or "economist", I have chosen the plainer title of "churchman". To the best of my belief, no one during recent years has visited and written about Russia in that specific capacity, while it is my strong conviction that the issues which are being decided there concern churchmen at least as much as they concern anyone else.

My journey began one night in late August of last year when I boarded the Soviet ship *Ian Rudzutak*, as she lay in the Thames under the shadow of London Bridge. That was in itself an experience—to drive through the lights and crowds of our familiar city, under the luminous face of Big Ben and over Westminster Bridge, and in a few minutes to be, as it were, in Russia. For the gang-plank was a frontier between two countries: once aboard the *Ian Rudzutak* the atmosphere was



A CLERICAL INTERNATIONAL

The caption is a Russian proverb, the general meaning of which might be expressed as
"Birds of a feather flock together."

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completely strange. From then on, till the moment when on my return I crossed the Polish frontier, I had the feeling of one who visits another planet, where the inhabitants are as different from ourselves as Martians might be, and where all the old and known values are overturned.

Even the English people aboard the *Ian Rudzutak* were "different". They were mostly what we call "intellectual Socialists", a kind of people not normally to be encountered in bulk, except in certain circles in Bloomsbury. Apart from a predilection for holding anti-God debates (of a very one-sided character) on the fore hatch, they were exceedingly agreeable; and it was amusing—for a while, at least—to listen in to strenuous discussions on politics, economics, and philosophy. The ideas ventilated might be neither very original nor very mature; conversation might have a faint but unmistakable flavour of Bertrand Russell; but it was a change from small-talk.

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The ship herself was run with reasonable efficiency by the officers, under the watchful eye of a soviet which was to report at the end of the voyage on their conduct. We only broke down once; and although, as we neared Leningrad, the crew were seized with an untimely passion, unpleasant alike to our noses and our clothes, for painting the top hamper in order to score marks in some maritime competition, every consideration was paid to the comfort of the passengers.

The "classless society" of the *Ian Rudzutak* was another refreshing change after the segregations of a "capitalist" vessel. It was rather fun to play deck quoits with the crew and to dance with the stewardesses. Some of the passengers, too, were delightfully naive—for not all were "intellectual Socialists". One lady, as we passed the coast of Estonia, was overheard to enquire, "Is that France?" "No, of course not," she was told. "Well," she replied, "we passed Germany the day before yesterday." One of

the men created a minor sensation in "Lenin Corner" by pointing to the portrait of Karl Marx and asking, "Is that the poet Longfellow?" There were other incidents, exceedingly diverting, but scarcely relevant to this book.

On the fifth day we reached Leningrad, to be plunged at once into the business of sightseeing. Our itinerary took us on to Moscow, where we spent four strenuous days, and from there to Nizhni Novgorod, in Tsarist times the site of the world's most famous fair. There we boarded another steamer, which abounded in cockroaches—and worse—a plague easily comprehended after a visit below to a deck packed solidly with peasants. We must have travelled about a thousand miles down the Volga towards the Caspian Sea, landing at riverside towns, where the church, if still open, might be inspected, and water melons were to be bought in the open markets. It was a pleasant interlude, between two spells of sight-

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seeing. The scenery was unimpressive, though after the flatness of Leningrad and Moscow the Zhiguli hills assumed the aspect of tall mountains ; and in the evenings an afterglow, such as you may see on the Nile, dyed our wake in flaming colours, while ahead a three-quarter moon climbed up above the banks and turned the river to silver. We steamed on at a leisurely pace, losing each day a few hours from our time-table, and not minding very much ; past Kazan, a great missionary centre in the days of the Tartar wars and now the capital of the Tartar Republic ; through the country of the Volga Germans, that strange, almost forgotten colony of Western Europe, where people with flaxen hair and Nordic heads stood at the quayside and talked in a German dialect ; past Ulianovsk, where Lenin was born, and Samara, a famine centre in 1921-2 ; and so to Stalingrad, once known as Tsaritsin, on the borders of Astrakhan, where we left our ship. Here the old and new jostle each other, for

while Stalingrad has become a great industrial centre, camels still stalk about its dusty streets.

A tedious journey by train next took us west and south to Rostov-on-Don, the capital of the country of the Don Cossacks. While staying there, we visited some of the state and collective farms in the neighbourhood, taking a lengthy journey in a ramshackle car over rudimentary roads, which a little rain would have turned into a morass. We should have gone from Rostov to Kharkov, the administrative capital of the Ukraine, but the days which our Volga steamer had lost were now debited to our account. So, reluctantly, we missed Kharkov and went straight to Kiev, our last halt in Soviet Russia, if I except an unanticipated and unwelcome detention close to the Polish frontier at the little town of Shepetovka, where there was nothing of the least interest to be seen.

I must apologize for inflicting this brief

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itinerary on my readers, but it is germane to the book in so far as it provides a background to the observations which I shall have to make. When anyone who has paid a brief visit to Russia is in the witness-box, “Where did you go?” is a question nearly as pertinent as “What did you see?” My remaining task in this chapter is to present a catalogue of the advantages and disadvantages which attend such a visitor, and which, on the one hand, encourage, and, on the other, excuse, his temerity in attempting, on so fleeting an experience, to record his opinions.

The first impressions which the traveller receives of any country—particularly one of the size and variety of Russia—though a never-failing source of irritation to the resident of long standing, may have a value of their own. A visitor like myself may enjoy certain advantages. Assimilating at the greatest pressure, talking, thinking, and reading Russia, he has a chance of grasping the

obvious, outstanding facts without being distracted by a multitude of details. He has, on the other hand, to contend with a number of difficulties when he tries to form an opinion on what he sees. The first of these is personal. Having (almost inevitably) come to the country with certain prejudices, Communist or anti-Communist, too often he sees only what he has been expecting to see; he confirms a little too readily his preconceived opinions; and if he is really anxious to form an honest judgment, he finds it necessary, again and again, to pull himself up and ask himself: "Am I being quite fair to this or that?"

The next difficulty is even more serious. The visitor is in the charge of Intourist, the State department which looks after foreigners travelling in Russia, arranges their journeys (not always very cleverly), and provides them with guides. There is that much truth in the trite warning addressed to the prospective traveller by his friends:

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“Of course, they will only show you what they want you to see.” Undeniably, the visitor is shepherded to the show places. If he wants to see workers’ houses, he is not taken to a slum. If he asks to be taken round a factory, Intourist will select one that is in good working order and not one that is in confusion. There is a little more to it than good showmanship. The guides I came across were charming people, almost needlessly solicitous for the comfort of those in their care, and very patient with their tiresome and eccentric ways, their occasional open incredulity, and their peevishness at the sketchy arrangements on railways and in hotels; but when the guides talked they necessarily talked to order, and anyone who relied exclusively on their information would get a very partial view of conditions in Russia. I was warned that it was unfair on them to try in their company to see sights which were not on the programme, as, if I were successful, they might be heavily punished.

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Fortunately, I was able to supplement their instruction from other sources ; and as no one tried to restrict my movements, I went about as freely as anywhere in Western Europe. I must add, however, that I did not always see what I wanted to see. I was anxious, for example, to visit the famous Autostroi works at Nizhni Novgorod, but when I reached the town I was told, first, that there would be no time, and then, when obviously there was time, that visitors disturbed the workpeople ! I naturally drew my own conclusions.

Yet another difficulty remains. Two people, seeing the same thing, may carry away a totally different impression, and both may be mistaken. On my first evening in Leningrad I walked through the streets with a friend. We both thought the people looked fairly well nourished. I thought they looked dispirited, but my friend did not agree with me. Two days later we discovered that for two months no meat had been on sale in

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the shops. The people, in fact, were seriously underfed, and we had not noticed it. Such was our introduction to the gravest of Russia's immediate problems.

CHAPTER TWO

FOOD AND THE PEOPLE

IT is possibly an error in tactics on the part of Intourist to start the visitor off at Leningrad. It is a mournful city, with a shabby, down-at-heel appearance, as of a slum which has seen better days. The plaster is peeling off the houses which were once the palaces of the old nobility and the merchant princes. The streets are among the worst in Russia. The Nevsky Prospect, rechristened the Prospect of the 25th October, once one of the finest thoroughfares in Europe, is a dreary waste of cobbles, pitted with immense potholes. The almost complete absence of traffic is more noticeable in Leningrad than in any other city I visited. Such stores as remain are almost empty of

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goods, and depressing queues of people stand outside the breadshops or wait for the trams, which are always crowded up to and beyond capacity. Moscow was more cheerful and less dilapidated, but there, too, as in other parts of the country, there was a shortage of food.

This shortage is the most serious feature of the present situation. In 1931, in order to obtain wheat for export and so to meet the foreign bills which were falling in for payment, the Government over-assessed the peasants. The harvest was poor, the peasants were skinned to the bone to produce their quotas, and it became necessary to issue seed corn for the harvest of 1932. But such were the need and the discouragement of the peasants that perhaps as much as half of the seed was eaten and not sown, with the result that the harvest this year has again been very thin. Some rather hurried decrees have now relaxed the pressure on the peasants and given considerably more latitude for private trad-

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ing, but the Government is really impaled on a dilemma; to meet its liabilities abroad it must export wheat, and to keep the people from outright starvation it must leave the peasant enough of his crop to encourage him to go on producing. The choice is between bankruptcy and famine, with the prospect of a narrow escape from either or both.

The shortage of food has been rendered more acute by the shortage of rolling-stock. During the whole of my journey I did not see a single new railway coach or wagon. I may have been unlucky, but it appeared to me that the railways, in the main, were still running on their pre-war stock, which is both scanty and in bad condition. I may add that the permanent way is worthy of the stock, and that the passenger trains are slow, uncomfortable, and almost always very late. When I was travelling to the Polish frontier, my train was five hours behind the scheduled time and I was held up for a whole

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day at Shepetovka. The water supply gave out, the lighting failed ; and from our funereal rate of progress and the anxious tappings which were to be heard underneath the carriages at every station, it seemed that something was wrong with the axle-boxes. This was no exceptional misadventure. We were late at Moscow, and late again at Nizhni Novgorod. Our train took a night and a day to carry us from Stalingrad to Rostov, a distance of about 250 miles, and even then was late in arriving. Almost the only Russian train which, in my experience, arrived on time, was one which I just failed to catch at Dyetskoe Selo.

In all these unpropitious circumstances the visitor might expect to observe signs of gloom and discouragement among the people, but these, I must admit, were not conspicuous, except (as I thought) in Leningrad. The older people, who remember older days, appear dejected, but older people often do ; the younger generation, taught to look hopefully

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to the future, seems cheerful and energetic. This contrast reflects the truth that Russia is a country for the younger generation, so far as at present it can be said to be a country for anyone. Nearly all the managers of farms and factories are young men ; many of the responsible posts in offices are filled by young women ; and even in the streets the great majority of the people seem to be in the twenties or early thirties. The older generation appears to have effaced itself. Hardly anyone, young or old, has an air of hunger ; and no one is attractively dressed.

It would, however, be erroneous to deduce from the drab monotony of the crowds on the pavements that everyone in Russia is on a level. Gradations and distinctions, the visitor soon learns, have already begun to appear, and there are degrees of prosperity or—perhaps more correctly—of privation. “After the Second Five Year Plan,” I was told more than once, “we shall have abolished classes.”

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To many, who believed that a classless society had already been established, such a statement is surprising. Yet there are, roughly speaking, two classes in Russia to-day—those who work with their hands and those who work with their heads, and the first has the best of it, receiving preferential treatment in such important matters as food and houses. There are exceptions, for the despised brain-worker, ejected from the front door, has a way of creeping in through the back. At the moment his demand is for equality of treatment, but when he has got that he is likely to ask for more. Although in general the manual worker is at present the better off, some of the more fortunate brain-workers, particularly in the upper bureaucracy, find compensations. The high official, for instance, may live in two rooms, like anyone else, but will have the use of a large and comfortable house when he wants to entertain or take a holiday ; he will have no motor-car, but he may have the use of two or three cars. The distinction between

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use and possession loses much of its significance in a society where money is of doubtful value and the command of commodities is what really matters.

More important, and more disturbing to Communist theory, are the gradations which keep appearing among the manual labourers themselves. Strictly speaking, these should enjoy an equality of reward, the man who cleans up the factory getting no less than the skilled engineer. Actually, this equality has been found impracticable. In order to encourage production in the factories and on the farms a system of piecework was introduced, and this has been extended to operations to which, in England and the United States, it would be thought hardly applicable. Since the whole purpose of piecework is to offer a greater reward to skill and industry, its practice may be good sense, but is certainly not good Communism. The Communist, admitting this, claims that it is a transitory evil necessary to the present stage of develop-

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ment. Transitory or permanent, the system is there, more difficult to abolish than it was to establish; and it results in disparities of reward as striking as any to be found in a British works. In every factory I visited I inquired into the rates of wages. At Traktorstroï, in Stalingrad, where some 16,000 men and women are employed, the rates for manual workers range from 100 to 700 roubles a month. The Russian manager is getting 1,800 roubles, and the foreign technicians, mostly German or American, are drawing the comparatively magnificent salaries of 450 roubles and (of vastly greater value) 500 American dollars a month. At a canning factory I found six different grades of manual workers, and at the Sel'mash Works, for the manufacture of agricultural machinery at Rostov, I was told that the average rate of pay was 180 roubles a month, but that the unskilled man was getting only 68 roubles.

It is almost impossible to translate these

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rates into their English equivalents. Owing largely to the difference between the internal and external purchasing power of the rouble, its real value is a matter of speculation. When the British visitor arrives in the country, he is invited to change his sterling into roubles at the rate of 6.60 to the pound. If he is wise, he changes very little. That evening, possibly, at his hotel, he will be surreptitiously approached by an individual who offers him 40 roubles to the pound. His delight at having obtained this enhanced rate will disappear when he finds, a day or two later, that in the right (or wrong) quarter it is possible to get as much as 100 roubles to the pound. (I met someone who exchanged a pound for as much as 130 roubles, nearly twenty times the official rate.)

This, however, is a digression. Even if we put the real value of the rouble as high as 60 to the pound, a wage of 100 roubles a month is not, by British standards, a living wage, and one of 68 roubles is hardly a wage

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at all. The comparison is scarcely fair, since considerations such as food prices and rents should be taken into account. An economist, with Socialist sympathies, told me he thought that on a very rough average the British worker was 50 per cent better off than the Russian, but I should have put the percentage higher. In the train, travelling to the frontier, I came across some German technicians from Kiev and Kharkov. They went to Russia about a year ago, as ardent Communists, to take up posts in factories. Unfortunately for themselves, they failed to arrange to be paid for their services in marks or dollars, and by a simple calculation they soon discovered that, apart from the inconveniences of life in Russia, they would be better off on the modest German dole than enjoying their nominally handsome Russian salaries. One of them was in such straits that he had had to sell his trousers in order to buy his ticket. They were no longer Communists. These are

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points to be remembered when the claim is made that Russia is "the land where there is no unemployment."

Although the real rate of wages in Russia may be a debatable question, the disparities are incontrovertible, and these, unless abolished, can hardly fail to produce in time a new *bourgeoisie*, a phenomenon uncomfortably contrary to Communism. When I suggested as much to Communists, they assured me that I was exaggerating the point, since the Government could always recover by taxation what it had conceded in wages—in other words, that the more skilled or more industrious worker would merely find himself paying back his bonus. This seemed to me to evade the issue. If differentiation in reward is necessary, it must be effective and not illusory; otherwise it will defeat its own purpose.

However this may be, intelligent Communists frankly admit that so far they have not succeeded in establishing a Communist

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society ; what they have got is a system of State Capitalism.

The throng on the pavements, the preponderance of the younger generation, the crowded trams, the ruinous streets, the almost empty shops, the brilliant lighting by nights, the shabby old houses, the great new blocks of workers' flats—these are among the traveller's first impressions. Should I add the pervading presence of the G.P.U. (political police)? I cannot complain that they ever troubled me, but the feelings of the visitor to Russia are continually harrowed by tales of their doings. Some of the G.P.U. wear uniform and are readily recognizable ; more alarming, if not more numerous, are the plain clothes men, the lineal descendants of the Okhrana or Black Hundred of Tsarist Russia, whose methods they reproduce and elaborate. I have heard it stated that most of the staff in the hotels and the guides supplied by Intourist are either G.P.U. or in close liaison. This may be an exaggeration,

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but much of the terror inspired by this ill-famed body proceeds from the fact that no one quite knows who does or does not belong to it. A young Russian whom I met told me that a few days earlier he had discovered by pure chance that his most intimate friend, whom he met and with whom he talked every day, was himself a member of the G.P.U. Undoubtedly, and despite a recent attempt to put them in their place, they are a big and unpleasant factor in Russian life, though many of their activities appear to be more futile than sinister. Opening the letters and keeping an eye on the movements of completely harmless persons does little damage to anyone and keeps the watchdogs occupied, but that is the visitor's point of view. On the only two occasions when I spoke to members of the old upper class I noticed that they were exceedingly afraid of being overlooked or overheard by somebody. And that somebody was the G.P.U.

CHAPTER THREE

THE END OF THE FIVE YEAR PLAN

IT is an open secret that the Five Year Plan, the most ambitious scheme of development ever attempted by a nation, has disappointed many of the hopes of its promoters. Into the degree of its success or failure I cannot enter; I can merely record some personal impressions, received shortly before the appointed time-limit expired. The period, it will be recalled, was shortened from five years to four.

To be fair to the achievements of the Plan, its magnitude must be recognized. In the space of four years a country, overwhelmingly agricultural in character, was to be turned into a modern industrial State.

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Great engineering works like the Dnieprostroi dam were to be constructed, widespread electrification was to be carried out, and hundreds of factories, equipped with the most modern machinery, were to be set up and to reach a specified output. Simultaneously, the countryside, populated by the most backward peasants in Europe, was to be collectivized.

Such a programme required more than capital, skilled engineers and supervisors, a dynamic force of direction, and a willing army of workpeople. It imposed a tremendous strain on transport. It involved vast movements of population. It made extravagant demands on the people themselves, who had to learn their new trades with unprecedented rapidity, to work at high pressure, and meanwhile to stint themselves of even the necessities of life, so that essential foreign machinery might be paid for. The Plan, in short, was to telescope the work of a generation into four years.

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Much of this has been effected. The date for the opening of the Dnieprostroi dam was announced while I was in Kiev. I passed close to the dam, but had no opportunity of seeing it and judging the truth of the claim that it is one of the wonders of the modern world. I did, however, inspect a few of the factories which, surrounded by workers' houses, hostels, clubs, schools and *crèches*, have sprung up on land which four years ago was waste.

I saw Traktorstroi at Stalingrad, a fine plant, equipped with the latest machines from America and Germany, where some 16,000 men and women are turning out tractors for the farms. At Stalingrad I also visited a canning factory, which has reached 75 per cent of its allotted output of 21,000,000 cans a year. At Rostov I went over the Selmarsh works, where 17,000 people, of whom a quarter are women, are manufacturing combined harvesters.

I am hardly qualified, especially after so

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cursory an inspection, to offer any criticisms on these plants, and such as occurred to me are not perhaps of the first importance. At Traktorstroi, in particular, the lay-out had a cramped appearance, and there were, by British ideas, far too many people hanging about doing nothing. Either the place was over-staffed, or faulty co-ordination between the departments was interrupting the smooth flow of work, so essential to mass-production. Large numbers of women were employed on very heavy work ; the internal transport struck me as inadequate everywhere, so that a lot of man-handling went on round the most up-to-date machines ; and the safety devices were nowhere such as would satisfy the British factory inspector.

In the course of my journey I encountered other and more serious criticisms. The commonest was that everything had been done in too much of a hurry. Modern industry is complex, easily thrown out of gear by some unforeseen deficiency. It would have

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been wiser, for example, to have made a reconstruction of the railways an early item in the programme, since nothing has a more dislocating effect than delays or breakdowns in transport. A well-known and reliable person in Moscow explained to me one of the causes of the blight which has settled upon the Autostroi works at Nizhni Novgorod. Hundreds of lorries were completed except for their radiators, which were to have been manufactured at Moscow. The radiator works, when called on to explain their shortcomings, pointed out that they had only received one-third of the necessary supplies of metal from the mines; and doubtless the mines, when taxed with remissness, shifted the blame on to someone else.

Everywhere a premium has been set on speed. The programme must be anticipated, the percentage of output must be not only reached but passed. So everyone was put on piecework, and an intensive propaganda urged the whole country to greater efforts.

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The result has been shoddy work, and waste on a scale which would send a capitalist enterprise out of business.

The personal experiences of the visitor, though less sensational, are a fairer illustration of this than the preposterous tales of abortive lorries, cars, engines, and so forth, with which he is everywhere regaled. I read in the *Moscow Daily News*—a frankly official journal published for the edifying of the foreign visitor—a casual complaint that, in the watch factories of the Tochmehk Trust, 31 per cent of the output had had to be scrapped as faulty! At the canning factory in Stalingrad I stood for some minutes by a machine which was carrying out a minor operation in the manufacture of tins. Beside the machine was a great mound of scrapped material, and, while I was watching, tin after tin came through buckled and had to be discarded. Yet probably all that the machine required was more accurate setting.

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Another common criticism is that plant of too delicate and complicated a character has been installed in the factories. The first impulse of the average Russian, when presented with a new machine, is to take it to pieces in order to see if he can improve it—a propensity which, when combined with technical inexperience, is unlikely to increase the working efficiency of the latest machine tool from America. Similarly, hundreds of tractors and combines, doled out generously to collective farms, have been smashed. In Moscow I met a man who had just travelled overland from Manchuria, and he told me that he had seen scores of these derelict tractors from his carriage window.

The more candid Communist will admit that the process of industrialization has been further impeded by the human turnover at these new factories. In three months practically the entire personnel, with the exception of the higher grade workers and technicians, may have changed. Needless to say, if it

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is hard to instruct an almost uneducated army of peasants in the intricacies of modern machinery and mass-production, it is doubly hard when that army is constantly on the move. The visitor might conclude that half the population of Russia was migrating, from the masses of people he sees in the railway stations, waiting for a train in which there is room for them, and meanwhile eating and sleeping quite placidly about the platforms. The queues for railway tickets are as long as the queues for bread. There is a story of a man who, as an especial favour, was given a licence to buy his ticket without the inconvenience of standing in a queue. Full of confidence, he marched up to the head of the first queue he saw, only to be recalled by scandalized shouts. "But," he explained, "I have a permit to take my ticket without standing in a queue." "So have we all," he was told. "This queue is for those who have 'permits' not to stand in a queue."

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The critic insists that these migrations are the result of bad working conditions. The peasant is drawn into a factory by propaganda, and is driven out of it by the reality. The apologist, on the other hand, declares that the Russian is a natural vagrant, inclined to believe that perfect happiness must be waiting for him in the next town. However this may be, migration is a fact, and whether it is the result of a Russian habit or of a new discontent, it is an undoubted obstacle to industrial efficiency.

The difficulty of converting unskilled peasants into modern farmers is at least as great as that of turning them into engineers, and appears to have been equally underestimated by the Government. The old methods of farming in Russia, however satisfactory to the peasant, happily possessed of the land which he took at the Revolution, were too primitive for the new needs of the country. A modern industrial State cannot exist on the basis of a mediæval agricul-



“ GODLESS MEN, IN THE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES,
ORGANIZE SHOCK BRIGADES ! ”

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tural system. A greatly increased output was required from the land for export purposes, yet actually the supply of wheat was less than before the Revolution. So collectivization was started, and in one of its three forms was carried on at such a rate that to-day about 90 per cent of the countryside is grouped either into *sovhoz* (State farms) or *kolkhoz* (collective farms).

An incidental cost of this transformation has been the practical extermination of the *kulak*, a person of whom the late Dr. Smiles would have emphatically approved. More intelligent or more industrious than his neighbours, the *kulak* began to increase his stock and land under cultivation. He became a small farmer; more disastrously for himself, he even began to hire labour. Naturally, when faced with a project for pooling land, implements, and livestock, he did not see the point of going equal shares with the village wastrels. In short, he was a *kulak*, to be denounced, taxed, and penalized in

every sort of way; and if he persisted in his evil habits, sooner or later he found himself, with wife and family but with a minimum of his property, put in a train under guard, carried some hundreds of miles from his home, and turned out to make a fresh start. What he left behind went into the common stock of the local *kolkhoz*.

Incidentally, the term *kulak* seems to have had an elastic definition. I was told in Moscow that it had been found convenient to include large numbers of priests in the category, and that, in order to familiarize the peasants with the idea of the class war, in those villages where no *kulaks* could be found a few had been hurriedly created! It is estimated that about a million small farmers and others were involved in this campaign, making, with their families, a total expatriation of perhaps 5,000,000 people. This, however, was an "incident"; the *kulak* has almost disappeared, and the collective farms go on.

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I visited one of these farms in the Don Cossack country, some 50 miles from Rostov. "Incidents" apart, I thought it a very promising experiment. By normal methods it would surely take at least a century to wean the peasant from his strips and his lean kine. The *kolkhoz* will probably accomplish this in a quarter of the time. Briefly, the peasants in an area pool their land and livestock. The Government then comes to their aid with machinery, cattle, pigs, poultry, and so on, credit being allowed on easy terms. Sixty per cent of the produce goes to the Government at a fixed price, while the remaining 40 per cent is for the use of the *kolkhoz*, to consume or to sell in the open market, as the local soviet may decide. The peasant receives a small wage on account and a problematical share of the profits at the end of the year. The *kolkhoz* I visited may have been exceptionally favoured, but the people seemed cheerful and contented.

As is well known, the collective farms

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have had a far from easy time. In the first flush of enthusiasm the peasants were forced on to them, with the result that they hurriedly consumed their livestock, so as to pool as little as possible. Discontent flared up into revolt, until at last the Government was alarmed and modified its policy. Large numbers of peasants promptly abandoned the collectives and asked for their land and stock to be returned to them. Nominally, they were within their rights; actually, the difficulties of de-collectivization are very great. The Government renewed its pressure and its propaganda, and to-day the peasant, once collectivized, has a poor chance of retrieving much of his property.

The Government next made the mistake of over-assessing the countryside, and the peasants thereupon limited their output, ate their seed corn, pilfered from their own crops, and slaughtered more of their beasts. Their discontent was increased by the fact that the Five Year Plan, specializing in the heavy

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industries, could offer little that they wanted in exchange for their produce.

Many of the farms were hastily formed and improvidently administered. In some cases the areas were too large; in others the manager sent from headquarters was a mere youth who had had a year or two at an agricultural college and had little knowledge either of men or of farming. The rage for mechanization was often carried to absurd lengths. Tractors and harvesters broke down. The factories blamed the peasants, and the peasants the factories. To replace the slaughtered livestock, pedigree cattle and pigs were imported from abroad, but these required care and good feeding, and many died. An English agricultural expert, who was in Russia this year, bluntly told his hosts that they were making a mistake if they thought they could treat their pigs as they treated their peasants!

These have been the teething troubles of the *kolkhoz*, the results, rather, of haste, inex-

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perience, and the ruthlessness of the *doctrinaire*. I must add that, except in the extreme form of the "commune", the *kolkhoz* is not essentially Communist. Here again is something which the strict Party man regards as transitory, and which may turn out to be permanent. In its commonest form—the *artel*—the *kolkhoz* is really a co-operative farm such as, with modifications, might be established in a capitalist country. The British farmer has much to teach, but also possibly something to learn from Russia; and not only in the way of co-operation. Returning by night from a *kolkhoz*, I saw, far out on the skyline, lights like fireflies moving across the country—they were tractors at work.

While in the Don Cossack country, I spent a night at a *sovhoz*. Although at present, I believe, generally an experimental farm, the *sovhoz* is more in harmony with Communist theory than is the *kolkhoz*. This particular *sovhoz* had been planted in the

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middle of almost unoccupied country, the property of Cossacks, so that there were very few peasants to absorb or expatriate. Every building was new, and the population of 10,000, consisting of 3,000 workers and families, and 1,200 students, was almost entirely imported. Of the 110,000 hectares (about 270,000 acres) only 40 per cent was under cultivation, but the farm had as many as 139 tractors. Here, too, the people appeared contented, though the average wage was only 90 roubles a month, and the lowest grade men were getting only 65 roubles. But rent, furniture, light and heat were all free, so there were alleviations.

In the same neighbourhood I visited a co-operative dairy farm where, incidentally, I found an amusing example of the Bolshevik's addiction to grandiose terminology. When the work flags in any enterprise, a body of picked men and women, known as "the Shock Brigade", are hurried to the scene, their purpose, as the name implies,

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being similar to that of storm-troops in war. On this dairy farm I was shown with pride a Frisian cow, minus one of her ears which, so I was told, had been spitefully removed by a *kulak*. This deficiency notwithstanding, she was producing $37\frac{1}{2}$ litres a day, and in recognition of so prolific a yield she had been christened "Shock Brigade".

I was told that throughout the country the output of the *kolkhoz* was better than that of the *sovhoz*, despite any advantages in equipment enjoyed by the latter. Since the worker in a *sovhoz* has no more interest in it than an artisan in his factory, and the peasant in a *kolkhoz* is theoretically entitled to a share in the profits, it may be that the incentive of personal gain still plays its part on the countryside.

The world has been a little too ready to proclaim the obsequies of the Five Year Plan. Its failures are too patent to be denied by anyone but a propagandist; but if the project had been less ambitious, and the publicity

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more restrained, the performance would be more impressive. It is only fair, too, to remember that the Plan was designed at a time when primary products were still fetching high prices throughout the world, and has been carried out on a steadily falling market. Russia, by comparison with foreign countries, has no foreign credit. She has had to borrow, on short-term loans, the capital required for new plant, and, of course, to repay these loans by exports. But when the bottom fell out of prices and the tariff walls of Europe slowly rose against her, she found an increasing difficulty in selling, though the need to buy still remained, and with it the need to pay for what she had already bought. In 1928 the architects of the Plan knew that the people would have to tighten their belts before 1932; they neither foresaw, nor could have been expected to foresee, the almost intolerable hardship they have brought on the country. A slump, so prolonged and so severe,

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was no more in their calculations than it was in those of the rulers of capitalist states.

It is easy to pronounce facile judgments on the Plan; to be so blinded by its blunders as to belittle its performances; or to be so fascinated by the conception of a planned economy as to ignore its failures. How much of its success is to be attributed to the capital and skill of foreigners? How much of its failure should be set down to the apparently inherent inefficiency of the Russian? Both are pertinent questions which time may answer. Could the pace of the experiment have been moderated? The Communist is sure that it could not, that a revolution—for such it is—can only be carried through with a fierce rush of energy, with a people keyed up to their work as though to a war. Possibly he is right. At least a tremendous force is abroad in the land, changing not only the face of Russia but the character of Russians; throwing up factories, damming

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rivers, digging canals, flooding the country-side with new methods and machines, training, drilling, disciplining, and slave-driving the people.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PARTY AND PROPAGANDA

FROM the regularity with which Stalin, the Georgian who once nearly became a priest, appears on the posters of Soviet Russia—his face is only less ubiquitous than Lenin's—the visitor will correctly identify him as the most important person in the land. He may therefore be surprised to find that Stalin has no official position in the Government, but is merely the head of the Communist Party. In that capacity he rules the country as absolutely as a President of the Trade Union Congress, who had just successfully led a General Strike, would rule Great Britain. He has the reality of power without the name, for the Communist Party—some 2,000,000 strong—is supreme in Russia

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to-day. It is the new aristocracy—an aristocracy of rank rather than of class—controlling such public opinion as exists, and imposing its will upon the soviets.

It has been a favourite charge that “the Party”, comprising so small a section out of a population of 160,000,000, cannot be said to represent Russia; but the Russian situation must not be discussed in the language of Western democracy. The peasants, although an overwhelming majority of the population, as a political factor are negligible out of all proportion to their numbers. Politically, their position is analogous to that of the servile inhabitants of the old Greek City State, the citizens, transacting the business of the community in the Agora, having their counterpart in the Party. This is a *corps d'élite*. A Russian cannot join it as an Englishman joins the Primrose League. He must produce sureties and show qualifications; he must take his turn on a long waiting-list; and, when he has been elected, he

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may be expelled with contumely for some comparatively minor offence.

Membership, indeed, is as exclusive as that of a particular West End Club. It carries obligations as well as privileges. The Party man probably is in the first category for food, and receives preferential treatment in such an important affair as housing accommodation. This was not admitted, but I observed that most of the tenants of the new flats which I inspected were members of the Party. On the other hand, a far higher standard of service is demanded from him. If he enjoys greater rewards, he has also to risk heavier penalties. When I was travelling from Rostov to Kiev, I met on the train a man who had been sent from Moscow to inquire into some charges of gross mismanagement on a collective farm. He was returning, he said, with conclusive evidence of the drunkenness and incompetence of the manager. We asked how the man would be punished, and were told that

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he would almost certainly be shot, because he was a member of the Party. An ordinary bungler would be treated more leniently.

The Communists, then, are not necessarily people who have enrolled for the sake of the loaves and fishes ; they are, as it were, the officers and non-commissioned officers of the *régime*, to whom much is given and from whom much is expected. With some aptness they have been compared with the Society of Jesus, for they go where and do what they are told, and the first rule of their order is one of unquestioning obedience.

They are, for the most part, white-hot enthusiasts for Communism. Their Bible is Marx's famous book, *Das Kapital*, and they resent, with the ferocity of the fundamentalist, any attempt to dispute the verbal accuracy of the Marxist theories. That is perhaps why they are less hostile to the *bourgeois* or Conservative visitor—an out-and-out unbeliever, to be smitten or converted—than to the

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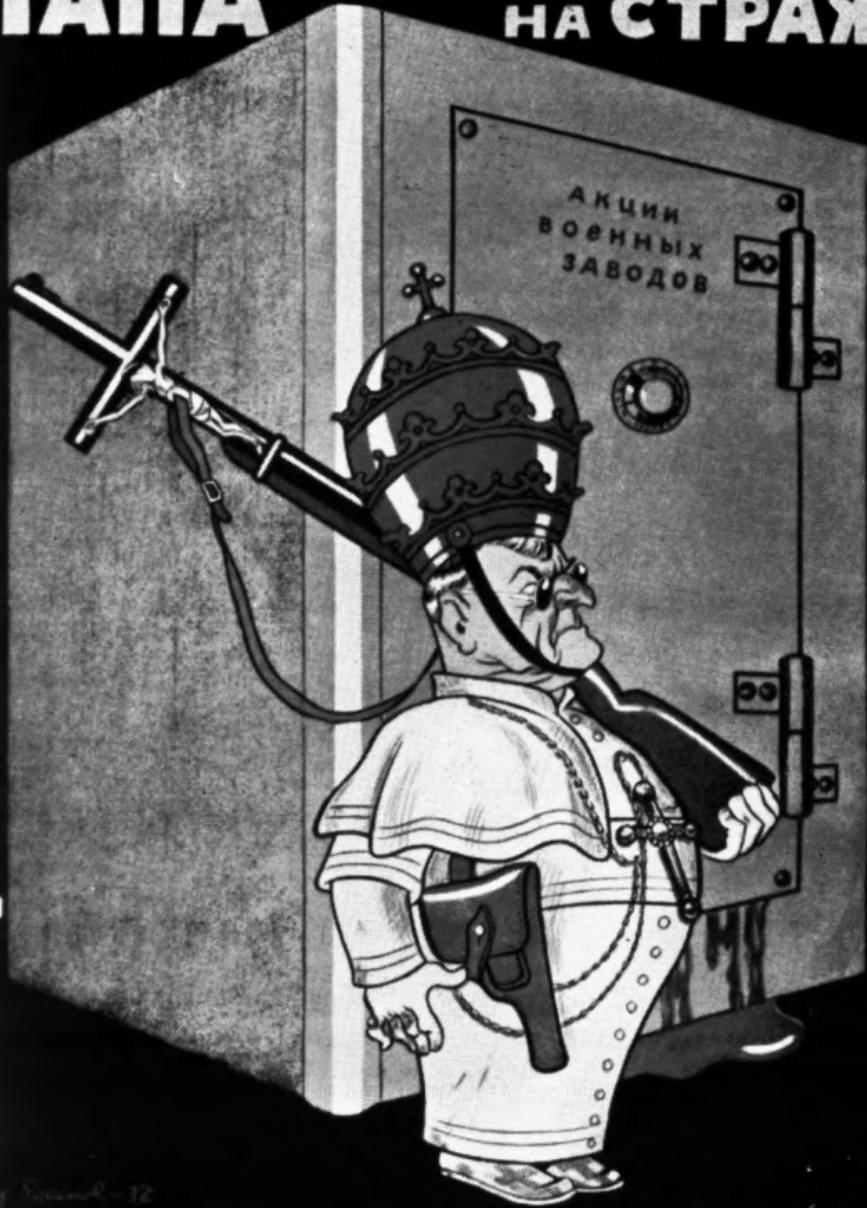
Socialist, a heretic, just near enough to them in his views to be dangerous.

Behind the Party, and of even greater importance for the future, are the Komsomol, or young Communists. This is an organization of about 5,000,000 young people, serving their political apprenticeship. In time, the best of them will join the Party; meanwhile, they are its storm-troops. On my first evening in Moscow I struggled through dense crowds into the Red Square, and mounted a tribune, on which were Stalin, Kalinin, and other Communist leaders, to watch more than a quarter of a million Komsomol, led by the Kommissar for War, march past the Lenin Mausoleum.

Massed bands were playing the "International" and other revolutionary airs, and the parade went almost endlessly by, thirty or forty strong by frontage, young men in sports dress, girls in red caps, ordinary workers, some carrying red banners, others with immense models representing farm and factory

ПАПА

НА СТРАЖЕ



“ THE POPE ON GUARD ”

This poster, for the offensiveness of which an apology is offered, represents the Pope standing outside a safe labelled "Shares of Armament Firms." A caption explains that clergy of all denominations are actively plotting against the Soviet Union and that the Catholic Church is a shareholder in the largest armament firms and is actually supporting schemes for "Imperialist" wars and intervention!

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products, dynamos, airships, aeroplanes, locomotives, and even rabbits. Darkness fell, and the parade went on by floodlight, while over our heads a great red flag, cleverly illuminated from below, flickered restlessly like a flame from a tower of the Kremlin.

Afterwards, I was told that, by comparison with other and similar parades, there was a falling-off both in order and enthusiasm; but the demonstration impressed me. The younger generation, even if its attendance was by constraint, was enjoying itself. The marchers had the appearance of people who were led rather than driven.

The Komsomol, in their turn, are recruited from the Young Pioneers, an organization many millions strong, which is equivalent to the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides of a capitalist land. The Party, then, supported and reinforced by the Komsomol, is the active, disciplined, proselytizing force which sustains the Bolshevik *régime*. Its principal weapon is propaganda on a scale happily

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undreamed of in Western Europe. I was told that the volume has much diminished since last year, when the people were less hungry and more receptive. This was hard to credit, for what remained was universal, all-pervading, and—to the visitor—almost intolerably tedious.

This propaganda cannot be dismissed as a trivial and transient phenomenon. It is of the essence of the Bolshevik *régime*, one of whose principal aims is a standardization of political thought. It gives a complete and, in many respects, a totally misleading picture of the world to-day. Russia, in its recurring refrain, is making heroic headway against the plots of counter-revolutionaries and foreign capitalists, while the outside world, willing to wound but afraid as yet to strike, is weltering in economic anarchy and distress. In presenting this picture, the Communist is not content with such recognized *media* for propaganda as the platform, the press, posters, and broadcasting. The stricter com-

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rade holds that every form of activity—art, literature, music, sport, the theatre, the film—to be of any value must serve the essential purpose of the State.

There is in Moscow a splendid collection of modern French pictures. The visitor is invited to fill in a *questionnaire*, on which he is asked to say how, in his opinion, the exhibition can be utilized in the class-war, a problem which must baffle even the ingenuity of the propagandist.

At Dyetskoe Selo the visitor is taken round the Catherine Palace, one of the most magnificent pieces of baroque in existence. He is expected, however, to register not admiration but disgust at such futile extravagance. He is next shown the palace where the late Tsar and his family lived. This has been left exactly as it was on the day when they were removed to Ekaterinburg. For most people, remembering their fate, there is a real pathos in such objects as the Tsarevitch's little cart, the slide on which the

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children played, the Tsar's pipes and pens, the rows of family photographs, and the numerous ikons on the walls of the bedroom of Nicholas and his wife. But ridicule, rather than pathos, is the purpose of the exhibition.

I saw half-a-dozen films while I was in Russia, and with one exception all were directly or indirectly propagandist, two or three of them being simple tales of blue-eyed Bolsheviks defeating the wiles of "White Interventionists". A man in my party was permitted to be present at the "shooting" of an important new anti-God film, depicting the attempts of a wicked priest to teach the story of the Fall to a class of sturdy proletarian children. He described the film as too funny to be really blasphemous !

At Moscow, I went to a performance of the sovietized version of *Hamlet*, which has been transformed into a burlesque on the folly and vice of kings and queens. *Hamlet* makes his first appearance in a very large top-

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hat from which hang long streamers of crape, so that he has the appearance of an old-fashioned Scots elder at a funeral. The ghost—the Marxist system has no room for ghosts—is Hamlet himself playing a trick to further his palace plot. Ophelia is not mad, but takes to drink and drowns herself when “under the influence”. Hamlet, soliloquizing “To be or not to be . . .” suddenly produces a coin and tosses it. I should add that the play was admirably produced. The theatre, the opera and the ballet are being well maintained, but, to my regret, the famous propaganda ballet was no longer being performed when I was in Moscow. Incidentally, I heard that Stalin, who is an admirer of Shakespeare, looks with disfavour on the sovietized *Hamlet*, and has been advising the younger poets and playwrights to study the romantic school for a change. So literature and the theatre may yet escape from the toils.

Propaganda then meets a man wherever

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he goes, in the factories, in the clubs, in the Parks of Rest and Culture; loud-speakers proclaim facts about the Five Year Plan to him from street corners and in railway stations; the trams, hoardings, newspapers, museums all deliver their message. Propaganda is in the air he breathes. It almost literally follows the Russian from the cradle to the grave, for the soviet child makes first acquaintance with it in pictorial form even before he has learned to read.

I found the principal playroom in a children's sanatorium at Dyetskoe Selo hung with placards and cartoons. One of them represented Sir Austen Chamberlain, in company with the Pope and Herr Kautsky, bidding impotent defiance to Stalin and the Five Year Plan. Curiously enough, Sir Austen is still one of the chief villains of the capitalist world. I was told—though I did not verify this—that in the Park of Rest and Culture at Moscow he appears as the Russian equivalent of “Aunt Sally”, and the good proletarian

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is encouraged to try his skill at so many shies a kopeck.

Although no other people would tolerate this continuous blast of publicity, I was assured that the Russian rather enjoyed it. However this may be, propaganda has certainly fulfilled its purpose in giving him a false conception of the facts, both inside and outside his country. It has afflicted him with something more than the usual self-consciousness of the revolutionary, who is always inclined to believe that the eyes of the world are on him, and that any misfortunes which may befall him are the result, not of his own folly or inexperience, but of the malignance of his foes. The Bolshevik moves in an unreal world of counter-revolutionary and capitalist conspiracies. There is a shortage of food, and he suspects the House of Morgan or the Bank of France. There is an accident on the railway, and it is sabotage. There is a failure at a factory, and some *bourgeois* is at the bottom of it.

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I can best illustrate some of the curious results of this propaganda with a few examples from my own experience.

A Communist, who had been making much of our figure of 3,000,000 unemployed, assured me that they were entirely dependent for subsistence on charity, and that most of them had no roof over their heads. Another would hardly believe that the British workman did not have an eighteen-hour working day. Just before I was in Moscow a British landowner, also on a visit, was seriously asked if he often flogged his peasants.

Another Communist with whom I was talking told me as a fact beyond dispute that, during the war, no capitalist or son of a capitalist was killed in any of the fighting armies; the casualties were all proletarians. His companion, who had spent some years in America and must have known better, confirmed the statement, adding that he himself had fought in the Battle of the Somme

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and knew that no British officer had been within 30 miles of the firing-line. When I asked him in what army he had fought, he replied, "The American," and when I mildly pointed out that America did not enter the war until several months after the Battle of the Somme was over, he merely repeated his statement.

Although I do not suggest that any of these remarkable assertions is being specifically taught as the truth, the mentality which can make and believe them is the undoubtedly product of propaganda. People who have been doped to this degree are about as amenable to argument as drug-addicts.

The matter is of such importance that I make no apology for having dealt with it at length. The influence of propaganda on the older people, who retain a standard of comparison and some knowledge of the outside world, may not be so powerful as its promoters would like it to be. But when a generation, saturated in it from earliest

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childhood, has grown up, its full force will begin to be felt.

Even now it is a phenomenon too dangerous to be dismissed as childish. There is about Russia an undefinable war-atmosphere. A whole people is being organized, drilled, prepared—for something. They see themselves at present engaged in an economic war, but they are certain it will not end at that. Taught by Marx, they are convinced that oil and water may mingle as easily as the capitalist and communist systems. Ignorant or heedless of the national divisions of Europe, they see it as a capitalist entity. The day is approaching, they believe, when they will have brought their experiments in collectivization to a successful issue, and will be able to show a higher standard of living in Russia than in any other country. The international capitalist will then no longer hold his hand, and Russia will again, as in 1919, be attacked and invaded.

The people are being deliberately and

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openly prepared for this event. Soldiers are to be seen everywhere; even in my limited travels I came across two large camps of exercise. I was told that the Air Force was the biggest and one of the most efficient in Europe. In the ship which took me to Leningrad I witnessed gas drill among the crew; every factory worker has his gas helmet; and another English visitor told me that, when he was in Leningrad last year, the life of the city was suspended for two hours while a practice air raid was carried out.

Foreigners sometimes scoff at these preparations; they point to the condition of the country, and ask how any State, whose railways and supplies are in such evident disorder, can possibly hope to wage a successful war. They may be right, but I think they are inclined to over-estimate the complication and under-estimate the destructiveness of modern weapons of war.

Scaremongering is always odious, and it is unnecessary to labour the point. Un-

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doubtedly, the Bolsheviks do not desire war at the moment, if only because in Russia a war has generally been the opportunity of the revolutionary. They had a bad scare during the summer of 1932, when they believed they were going to be drawn into a conflict with Japan; and they discovered then, if they had not known before, that they were unprepared for the event. Nevertheless, when people have been told, day after day, that someone intends to fasten a quarrel on them, they may end by starting the quarrel themselves, when they are ready for it. In this direction we have as much to fear from the failure as from the success of Communism. The time may well come when the Soviet, shrinking from the consequences of its policy, will find that it has manufactured public opinion too well.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SOVIET AND THE CHURCH

WHEN a Communist is questioned about the Russian Orthodox Church, his answers suggest a man with a slightly disreputable relative, whose existence, though undeniable, is scarcely a topic for polite conversation. While I was in Russia no one volunteered to give me any information about the Church or appeared to know much about the subject. At Kiev, my guide offered to take me to a "Mass" at the cathedral at seven o'clock in the evening !

Obviously, in a survey of this kind, I cannot deal with the historical and religious origins of the present situation. The Russian Church, as everyone is aware, was State-con-

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trolled to a degree unknown to the Church of England, even in its most Erastian days. Whether it was as corrupt and superstitious as its critics have claimed is disputable. In a country where there is a low standard of financial morality, a great and wealthy corporation inevitably contracts some of the vices of its neighbours ; and the outsider often misinterprets as superstition a ceremonial which he does not understand and a devotion which he does not share.

If the Russian Church failed in its duty to teach ; if it allowed itself to be separated from the enlightened opinion of its time and to be associated, without sufficient protest, with the grosser abuses of Tsarism ; if it did not insist with due force on a high standard of personal morality among priests and laity—nevertheless, it has shown, as no other Church in our time has had opportunity to show, its capacity to suffer for the Faith. If it has erred, it is expiating its error by martyrdom.

It is necessary at the outset to emphasize

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the obvious fact that religion—and still more a Church—has no place in the Soviet system. The Communist believes religion to be an invention of the "*bourgeois*" class, designed to reconcile the worker to a hard life in this world by promising him a better time in the next. I noticed how this theory was supported in anti-religious museums by an inverted use of the Parable of Dives and Lazarus. It is expressed, even more forcibly, in the Red Square at Moscow. Here the venerated Chapel of the Iberian Virgin once stood. It has been demolished, and to-day, close to its site, where once a sacred image was set, is a plaque carrying Marx's famous words : "Religion is the opium of the people." The present life being all that concerns the materialist, the suggestion of a future existence is regarded merely as an attempt to divert attention from mundane evils.

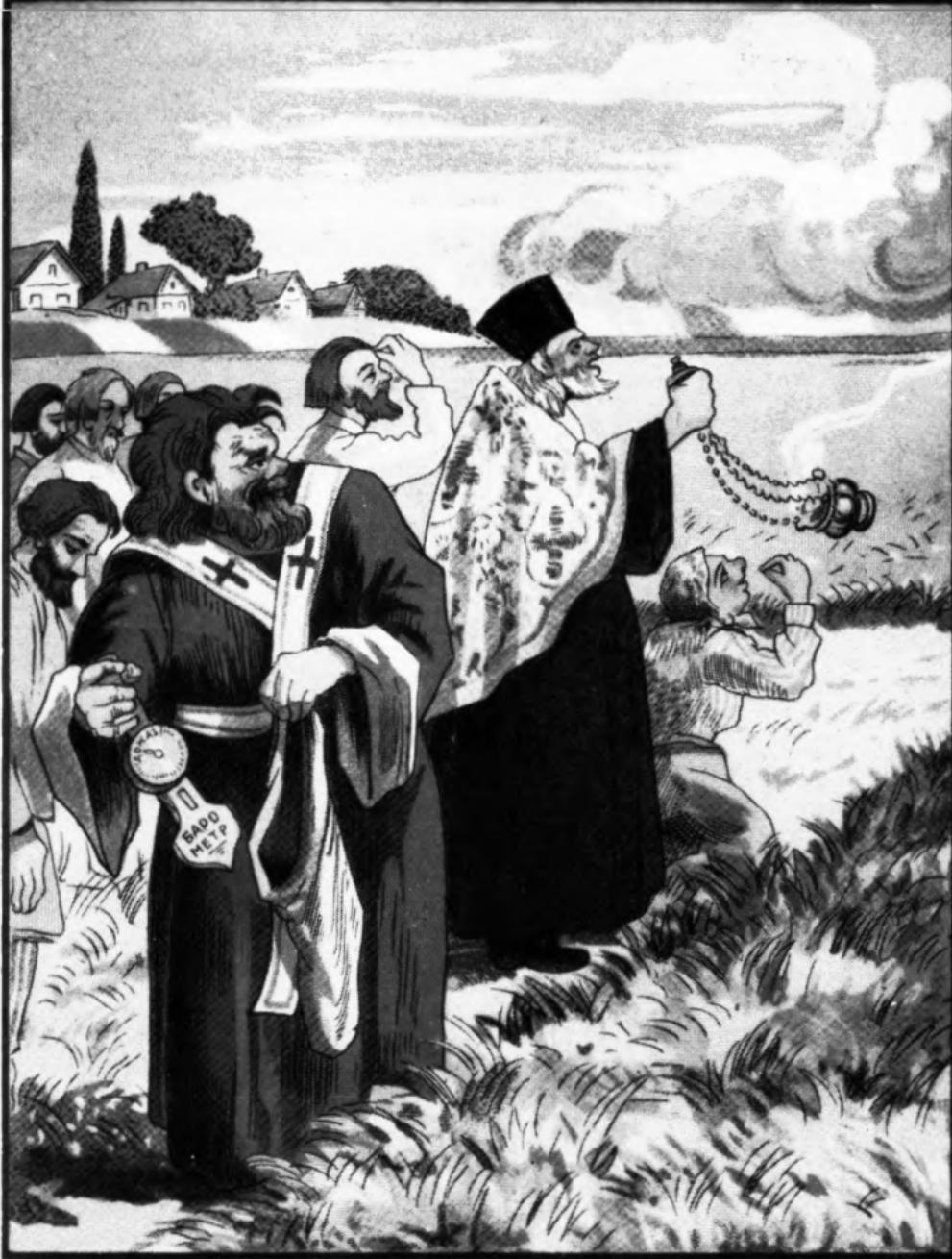
The difference in point of view may be illustrated by a simple example. In the old days the priest would bless the fields for the

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encouragement of the coming crops ; to-day, with the same object, the Bolshevik applies a dressing of chemical manure. Obviously it does not occur to the Bolshevik, nor, unfortunately, does it seem to have occurred to the priest, that the two methods are not mutually exclusive.

Hostility to the Church, however, derives an even greater urgency from the inability of the Soviet system to admit any rival authority on moral questions. There must be one conscience, one ideology, one opinion, one kind of propaganda ; and a Church which might—and, indeed, must—challenge the moral decisions of the secular authority is an anti-social force to be eliminated as expeditiously as possible. It cannot be too clearly understood that between Bolshevism and the Church—any Church—a genuine peace is out of the question. Unless one of the parties is prepared to surrender its convictions, the one must in the end destroy the other.

In the early days of the Revolution the



“ DARKNESS IS THE ALLY OF THE POPES (PRIESTS) ”

This poster shows a priest blessing the crops and praying for rain, while in the foreground another priest holds a barometer which indicates that rain is coming.

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Bolsheviks encouraged the various sects, such as the Old Believers and the Baptists, but only because they believed that by so doing they would weaken the Orthodox Church. When the sects began to thrive, to establish their own social organizations and to attract the younger generation, the Bolsheviks took fright and changed their policy. To-day they are equally hostile to every religion, and although I have heard it said that the synagogues are treated more leniently than the churches, such figures as I obtained scarcely support this charge of favouritism. It is true that there are many Jews in high places in Moscow, but these, I believe, have all lapsed into atheism, and a renegade Jew presumably loves his old religion as little as any other renegade.

It is very difficult for the visitor to discover what is happening to the Church. He should not speak, or try to speak, with any priest, for if he does, the consequences—for the priest—may be disastrous. He can pick up

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a certain amount of information, as I did, from independent sources, and this he will probably find conflicts with the information which he receives from officials. Finally, he may visit, as I visited, a large number of churches, and draw his own conclusions. Mine, being personal, may have no great value, and I admit that someone else, proceeding by the same methods, might arrive at a totally different opinion. With this warning, I submit the results of my observations.

One of the first and strongest impressions I received on arriving in Russia was the rate at which churches were being closed or demolished. At Leningrad the Kazan Cathedral, with its colonnade of Corinthian columns copied from St. Peter's, Rome, its Napoleonic trophies, and its ikon of the Kazan Madonna, had been closed for worship a few weeks before I arrived. The great Cathedral of St. Isaac is an anti-religious museum. Its propaganda is of a very crude character, directed mainly at the Orthodox Church. Against the

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splendours of the ikonostasis, with its pillars of lapislazuli and malachite, it recalls the small boy who scribbles an obscenity on the gate of some noble building. There are photographs of priests blessing troops, tables of figures showing the former wealth of the Church, displays of alleged false relics, and even the mummified body of a saint. The centre-piece is a real cannon, flanked with full-sized effigies, one of which, I was told, represented the Pope and the other the Archbishop of Canterbury, encouraging the capitalist nations to war. Both were richly but improperly dressed.

The only church in Leningrad which, in the limited time at my disposal, I found open, was the Znamenya Church in the Square of the Insurrection.

It was once the glory of Moscow that she had forty times forty churches. Most of these have been either shut, destroyed, or converted to secular use. A resident told me that he did not think more than fifty churches

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were still open. I certainly had some difficulty in locating any of this remnant, but eventually I found two, one a small church near the Chinese Wall, and the other a larger church across the river. I attended services at both.

The process of destruction or secularization, accelerated to a marked degree in the larger cities, where a man will find a church open one week and closed the next, is apparently being carried out at a slightly less violent rate in the smaller cities and towns and in the country. During the few hours I spent in Nizhni Novgorod I failed to find an open church, but in the smaller towns of the Volga Valley as many were open as were shut. At Stalingrad the principal church was being demolished as I went through. At Rostov-on-Don the cathedral is now a Government building, while a big church in the centre of a square adjoining the main street is being pulled down, and in other clearly ecclesiastical buildings the visitor recoils before the red and

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white posters of the Union of the Godless. In the same town I found unmolested a big church, evidently the pro-cathedral, and on a hill behind the public gardens a smaller church, where a service was in progress. It was opposite a school, filled that evening with young workers, and when the doors of the church were opened, the hum of the class-rooms was distinctly audible. While I was there, a very old bishop, so frail that he could scarcely move without support, suddenly appeared, and was vested and led to the ikonostasis, from which he blessed the congregation.

The situation is better in the Ukraine, where the Church has old associations with the national movement. At Kiev the great Lavra Monastery, once a centre of Ukrainian culture, like all the other monasteries, has been closed. The church, with its gold and silver altars and its magnificent Gospels, has become a museum ; a great strip pasted across the ikonostasis informs the visitor that " Religion is against the interests of the workers ",

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and in the crypt the uncorrupted body of a Metropolitan of Tobolsk is shown with appropriate warnings. The underground monastery, once a famous place of pilgrimage, is now a sort of peep-show for tourists and proletarians. Nevertheless, at Kiev the open churches are still in a majority, and the great copper figure of St. Vladimir still looks out over the Dnieper. While I was there I had an interview with the Soviet official "in charge of religious affairs" in the province, and he gave me the figures for the city. Ten out of forty Orthodox churches and twenty out of thirty-two synagogues have been closed. There are two Catholic and two "Protestant" churches, all four of which are still open.

I enquired from him, and in other quarters, into the procedure of closing a church. Both he and our guides assured me that secularization is not "compulsive". It begins with a local petition, signed by laymen who are not necessarily Churchpeople. This is referred to

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the local administrative centre, which then calls for the opinion of the congregation. After receiving this, it delivers a verdict. Obviously, this leaves the Soviet judge in its own cause, able to close or demolish any church when it can do so without unduly aggravating local opinion. I was informed (elsewhere and unofficially) that when the parishioners were laggard in presenting the necessary petition other pretexts were sometimes adopted. A church would be declared a "dangerous" building (architecturally), or its presence would be found to obstruct some scheme of street-widening, and it would go.

I asked the official what happened, when a church was closed, to the ornaments, some of which might be extremely valuable, and was told that the academies of science and the museums were entitled to take as much as they wanted, and that books and ikons were all appropriated by museums. Any furniture was handed over to the schools, and the

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Church could keep anything that any of these bodies did not want.

This, however, is not the whole story. At the Revolution, the Church was stripped of all its property and endowments, so that the priests are entirely dependent on the offerings of the faithful. They have no food cards, and must buy what they need in the open market —when there is anything there. They may not live in the old clergy houses, but must find apartments for themselves outside. They are forbidden to teach religion to anyone under the age of eighteen or to allow children to take part in religious processions. I once watched a procession in the precincts of a cathedral in which a number of children in charming peasant costume were taking part. I was accompanied by a Communist professor who was acting as interpreter, and he pointed an indignant finger at the children, exclaiming: "That is against the law!" The priest, in short, may use his church for worship and for no other purpose.

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My official at Kiev informed me that the Soviet was "against religion but not against the priests", and when I remarked that I had heard a rumour that large numbers of priests had been shot or sent to lumber camps, he replied that that was because they were counter-revolutionaries, not because they were priests. I did not think it worth while to pursue the subject.

The congregation, to which the clergy must look for support, is scarcely better off than the clergy themselves. I was assured that in civil matters there was no discrimination against Christians, but this accorded neither with my other information nor with probability. Where there is a fierce competition for food and housing, the man who has the black mark of Christianity against him is unlikely to get much of either. Every church is registered in the names of fifty members of the congregation, and religion must mean a good deal to the man who allows his name to appear on such a roll.

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The priest, then, is dependent on the alms of people who themselves are able to spare little, and the small coins, which everybody seemed to drop in the big bowls passed round during the service, cannot in the aggregate have reached a very substantial sum. As if this were not enough, a church is taxed. Here again I found a conflict of evidence. An official insisted that the only charge was a small land tax, fixed in 1927 and since unchanged. Elsewhere I was told that the taxation of churches was unreasonably heavy, and was frequently raised in order to compel the congregation to petition for closure.

How far, it may be asked, are these measures achieving their plain purpose, the destruction of Christianity, or, as I heard it put, the "liquidation" of religion by 1937, when the Second Five Year Plan ends? Again, I can only give my own opinion. It seemed to me that, as against the Church, this prolonged persecution cannot fail to be effective. It has broken its organization, partially destroyed

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its personnel, and is steadily eliminating its buildings. Surely nothing less than a miracle can save a Church under such a dispensation !

Whether persecution is being equally successful in suppressing religion, or is only driving it underground, is another matter. I think there is little doubt that, by decree and by propaganda, the Bolsheviks have greatly weakened religion. Every town of any size has now its anti-religious museum, in which the supposed opposition between religion and science is crudely emphasized. Curiously enough, Darwin (after Karl Marx) is the prophet of the Godless, although it might be thought that such theories as natural selection and the survival of the fittest were hardly consonant with Communist ideas. The speculations of Einstein and the astro-physical school are frowned upon as counter-revolutionary, evolution being regarded as the most effective stick with which to belabour the fundamentalist dog. In such an atmosphere a generation is growing up which has received

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little or no religious instruction. Boys and girls are coming of age who were only six years old when the Revolution took place. The younger people discuss religion with a kind of contempt, as though it were a fairy tale which no educated person would dream of treating seriously. In all the churches I visited, except in Kiev, the congregation, crowded though it often was and devout though it always was, consisted almost entirely of elderly people. I heard stories of children who won commendation by destroying the family ikons, and it must be one of the tragedies of Russia that believing parents must look on while their children are taken from them spiritually and taught to despise what they themselves hold sacred. This, at least, explains such small measure of tolerance as the Church still enjoys. The Bolsheviks do not mind very much if the older generation goes to church ; they would be seriously alarmed if they found the younger generation going there too.

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Before I end this article I must add one further personal impression, which may be dismissed, if my readers please, as pure fancy. While I was in Russia I saw at close quarters a large number of priests. I was struck in most cases by the extraordinary look of peace on their faces. They were, I thought, the faces of men who knew what was in front of them and simply did not mind ; who were content to go on in their duty and leave everything else to God. And almost my last memory of Russia is of the Archbishop of —, a serene and indomitable figure, driving across the — street in a ramshackle droshky, past a Red band playing revolutionary airs and a noisy muster of young Communists.

He was on his way to celebrate the patronal festival of his cathedral.

CHAPTER SIX

RELIGION AND THE SOCIAL IDEALS OF BOLSHEVISM

THE dramatic collapse of organized religion in Russia may be ascribed to two general causes. The first is the ascendancy of the movement we call Bolshevism, which, though economic in expression, draws its strength from spiritual forces. The second—and this must be frankly stated, for the stricture applies with only a little less force to the Churches of Western Europe—is the error of the Orthodox Church in condoning the social injustices which disfigure the capitalist system.

Russian Communism is the offspring of Nihilism, in its origin a spiritual revolt against the degradation of the worker and the peasant, an ascetic and even a religious movement,

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and of Marxism, an aggressive and militant philosophy which came to Russia from Germany.

The Russian Church, even in decadence, never ceased to be conscious of a Messianic mission. Moscow was "the third Rome", the last repository of true religion, the ultimate antagonist of anti-Christ, the forerunner of the Kingdom of God. This Messianic consciousness was appropriated by the Nihilists. It is also, in a very different form, inherent in Marxism, with its exaltation of a class—the proletariat—in whom immediate authority and the perfect society of the future are to be found.

The Bolshevik, who is the product of these two forces, seeks to achieve by violent, external and material means the revolution which the Christian believes can only be brought about through the conversion of the individual soul. "The Kingdom of God is within you," declares the Christian. "My kingdom is of this world," retorts the Bol-

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shevik, "to be established by the sword and by the class war."

It is this religious, Messianic element in Bolshevism which gives to it its fervour and fighting enthusiasm. The Bolshevik is a materialist ; his god is a social collectivity ; his vision is bounded by the frontiers of the life of this world. Yet Bolshevism, in its crusading zeal, its readiness to persecute, its reverent remembrance of its martyrs—honoured to-day by countless monuments all over Russia—its stern adherence to the text of its literature, its impatience of heresy, its views on the subservience of art to the social purpose, its symbols, its Red baptisms and Red funerals, and its division of the world into the proletarian elect and the *bourgeois* damned, carries the authentic stigmata of a religious movement.

In nothing is this more evident than in the new cult of Lenin, immensely popular with the rank and file, but disconcerting to the intellectuals of the Party. The traveller who



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goes to Russia by a Soviet ship makes first acquaintance with it almost before he is out of the Thames. He will be led to the stern cabin, where he will find a sort of chapel, with a bust of Lenin flanked by two vases of flowers, and portraits of Marx, Stalin, and others of the Communist hagiology hanging on the walls. When the traveller arrives in Russia, Lenin's features meet him wherever he goes, on postcards, statues, pictures, and busts. He will be taken to the drab room in the Smolny Institute, where Lenin lived and worked, and from which he directed the October Revolution. The furniture is as it was when he left, in fact, as it was when he went there, for he was careless of personal comfort and would have nothing changed.

The traveller moves on to Moscow, and there, in the Red Square, in the shadow of the Kremlin, he sees the Lenin Mausoleum, a simple, dignified building of red granite and black diolite, strangely harmonious with its ancient surroundings. When Lenin died, his

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body was embalmed in honey and placed in a temporary tomb. Various misadventures followed, and there is a school which asserts (privately) that the body was damaged beyond repair and has been replaced by a waxen effigy. Another school holds that the body is truly Lenin, but the embalming was executed so badly that frequent restoration is necessary.

When I arrived in Moscow the tomb was closed—"for repairs to the cold storage plant," we were told—an event, so the cynics say, of occasional occurrence during the summer months. It was reopened on the afternoon of my last day in Moscow, so that I was able to pay my visit. Several hundred "pilgrims" were waiting patiently in the Red Square, and among them were several vendors of small Lenin souvenirs—pictures, medallions, monograms, and so forth. Presently I was admitted to the underground chamber where Lenin lies in his glass case—a little man with a waxen face and a pointed beard, a khaki blouse covering the upper part of

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his body. That face followed me through Russia ; it was in museums, squares, private houses ; it even sprouted from the flower beds in the public gardens at Kiev. In the old days every house in Russia had its ikon ; it seems as though the time were approaching when every house will have its photograph of Lenin. It is a strange apotheosis for that little, shabby man, who might once have been seen trudging daily from his lodging in Bloomsbury to the Reading Room of the British Museum ; who thought, planned, and wrote for long years in his Swiss exile ; who, sent to Russia in the " sealed train ", in a few months occupied the throne of the Tsars ; who faced revolution, civil war, famine, and the task which killed him. With something of the Pauline zeal, and all the Pauline hatred of compromise, he served to the end the desolating creed of his master Marx. While I was in Russia I met several people who had heard Lenin speak, and one or two who had known him personally. I questioned

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them about him. What was it that gave him his unique ascendancy? His appearance was not imposing; he did not possess, or scorned to use, the arts of the demagogue; he was no master of rhetoric. His power, it appeared from their replies, was intellectual—almost coldly intellectual. Other people would make more eloquent speeches in the Russian way, elaborating every point and repeating it many times in a slightly different form. Lenin, on the other hand, was a master of lucid and logical exposition; there were no flights of oratory, but every word counted. Possibly, at a time when people were beginning to weary of the emotional periods of the self-appointed leaders of the February Revolution, this style won them over by its novelty.

It might be expected that the downfall of religion in Russia would have been accompanied by violent changes in morality and the laws which control it. These changes are not so extreme as might be supposed. Contrary

to the common belief in Western Europe, the family still exists, and with it such family life as the appalling housing conditions permit. It is true, nevertheless, that the Communist is not a "family man" by choice. The communal kitchen is at present a housing expedient, but will survive as an article of social faith. The Five Year Plan has necessitated the *crèche*, where the child may be cared for while the mother is working in the factory ; but here again a temporary need conforms with ultimate policy. A love of privacy and domesticity is the mark of the *bourgeois* ; the true Communist will dine and eat with his fellows, and will have no objection to parting with his children. The family has, of course, been weakened by the new facilities for marriage and divorce. Marriage is a simple matter of filling in a form. (I went to a register office and saw a young couple sitting on a bench awaiting their turn.)

Divorce is theoretically nearly as easy, provided the necessary alimony is forthcoming.

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Actually, divorce is restricted by the housing shortage. A man may wish to be rid of his wife, but may not expel her from the single room which is probably all the accommodation they have. Consequently, a new wife would have to live in the same room, an embarrassing situation for all the parties. Birth control is encouraged, but its practice is presumably limited by the shortage of appliances. I was told that abortion was only permitted after a woman had borne four children, unless some special reason for an earlier operation could be given. Yet undoubtedly a large number of abortions are carried out every year.

The removal of Christian inhibitions in matters of morals does not, to the eye of the visitor, appear to have resulted in a general licence. There is a strain of ascetism in the straiter Communists; self-control is encouraged; prostitution, though not entirely nonexistent, is apparently less prevalent in Leningrad and Moscow than in London. Loose

living, in fact, is an offence against the social standards of Communism.

It is in other directions that the new broom, sweeping away things good and bad, is most in evidence. I attended a law court in Moscow where justice was being administered by a lady judge, assisted by two workers' delegates, who were present to learn, to advise, and to report, with the prospect of themselves becoming judges in the future. The cases which I heard were both connected with marriage. In the first a *divorcée* was claiming a more generous alimony from her late husband. The second was an involved dispute, in which a woman who had been living with a man for seven days was asking the court to compel him to register a marriage with her. In both instances the judge found for the man, the second case being exposed as a vulgar conspiracy on the part of the lady to obtain housing accommodation; and the general opinion appeared to be that justice had been done.

There is much that is attractive in the simplification of legal procedure on which the Bolsheviks insist. There is no case law ; the judge is expected to use his common sense ; and while advocates still exist, they are there to assist the judge in ascertaining the facts, receive a salary like any other worker, and if they attempt to advocate are punished. The judge is generally a worker himself (or herself), holding the position for a year and then returning to the factory. It is doubtful whether this simple system will survive the multiplication of decrees and the growing complications of life in the Soviet State.

I went on from the court to see a Soviet prison, or House of Correction, as it is called. This was for minor offenders, prisoners guilty of counter-revolutionary activities or of such heinous crimes as speculation being dealt with differently and more drastically than those who, for example, merely commit robbery with violence.

It seemed to me that the Bolsheviks have a

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clearer and more logical conception than we have of the treatment of criminals. A House of Correction is a sort of moral hospital, a term of imprisonment being not a punishment but a reformatory period which may last as long as ten years. The prisoners, who did not look unhappy, may shorten their sentences by one-third if they choose to work. They are divided into categories, according to the progress they show, the first category being allowed fourteen days' holiday a year, and the next category seven. A party of first category men, in high spirits at the prospect of a holiday, was about to leave when I went round. The prison itself was an old building, dating back to Tsarist days ; it was very full, and the cells, each of which had three inmates, did not look either hygienic or cheerful. Doubtless, however, the conditions are no worse than in the majority of houses in Moscow.

Since there were six hundred inmates where formerly two hundred were lodged, it would

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not appear that minor criminals were on the decline. Certainly, an immense amount of petty thieving goes on, particularly on trains. During the short time I was in the country I twice came across the train thief, a light-fingered artist with a long steel hook with which he fishes through an open window.

I saw plenty of "drunks" in the towns, including four gentlemen in an advanced state of inebriety, who entered my bedroom from a balcony one night in Rostov, and were with difficulty induced to leave. The Bolsheviks, to their credit, are conducting an active propaganda against drunkenness. In some of the Parks of Rest and Culture grotesque effigies caricature the follies of the drunkard, or realistically describe the unpleasant medical consequences of over-indulgence in alcohol; and in factories and on collective farms the topers are pilloried on the notice-boards and at the pay-booths.

The procedure of courts and the treatment of criminals reflect the psychological theories

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of Bolshevism ; its social theories, expressed in a number of enterprises, admirable in conception if sometimes imperfect in execution, are a reproach to the record of the Church, and illustrate the second cause to which I alluded in my first paragraph.

An unsparing critic of the *régime*, whom I met in Leningrad, admitted to me that in the care of mothers and children Russia was in advance of England. The visitor soon tires of the ubiquitous *crèche* to which his flagging footsteps are guided. The maternity hospitals, the regulation of periods of rest before and after childbirth, the children's clinics, and the kindergartens, if not entirely innovations in Russia, at least appear on a vastly greater scale than before the Revolution. At one time, milk was given free to babies up to the age of three ; though lately, owing to a shortage in supplies, the age-limit has been lowered to one year.

Much, again, might, and should, be written of the energetic attempts which are being

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made to educate the people, though credit has not been allowed for the striking educational progress recorded during the years immediately preceding the War. In pre-revolutionary days the majority of the population was illiterate ; the Bolsheviks have introduced universal compulsory education for children, with night classes for factory workers. The smallest villages now have their schools, and there is a real hunger for learning. The next generation will be free from the scandal of illiteracy.

Among other admirable innovations are the Homes of Rest, where factory workers may be lodged for a fortnight or more. When I was in Leningrad, I visited one of these Homes, a merchant's house adapted, not very intelligently, to its new purpose. I was informed that sanatoria have been opened in the South, where consumptive workers—consumption is the scourge of Leningrad—are sent for treatment. In the old days every town had its public gardens, which too often

were the preserve of the wealthier citizens. At Stalingrad, I dined in a dusty park, crowded with the proletariat, and was told that formerly a notice forbade the entry of "poor people, soldiers, and dogs". All over the country, public and private gardens have been turned into Parks of Rest and Culture—a name to frighten the self-conscious Briton. Here energetic attempts are made to organize the new leisure resulting from shorter working hours—a matter in which we have made little progress in England. Facilities are provided for sports of every kind; open-air cinemas and theatres have appeared; and in Moscow I saw a fine new Stadium.

The same energy has been applied to the shortage of houses. Housing conditions in the larger cities are very bad, but the blame does not lie exclusively with the Bolsheviks. Conditions were always bad; if to-day they are much worse, if fifteen or sixteen people are herded in small and insanitary rooms, if the old slums have become ruins and the old

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merchant palaces are becoming slums, this is partly because for some years the building of houses was suspended by war, and even more because rapid industrialization has brought a vast new population into the cities.

Everywhere the traveller goes he finds blocks of flats, some built, some building, some barely begun. On an outside view they are not unpleasing, but on closer inspection many will be found jerry-built, far better, no doubt, than anything the tenants have had before, apparently adequate in accommodation, convenience, and sanitation, but deplorable in workmanship and materials. Even the *Moscow Daily News* occasionally contains complaints that the new houses are already falling to pieces. When I visited a workers' club at Stalingrad, I nearly fell through a large hole in the floor, where the cement had just dropped out; in other buildings I visited, the floor-boards were loose and none of the window-frames fitted; and in a big new block of Soviet offices at Nizhni Novgorod ugly

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cracks stretched across the imposing balconies. The inference was unavoidable that after ten years of hard frost and hot sun a high proportion of these new buildings will be falling to pieces.

New houses are shoddy, old houses are insufficiently altered, the furniture in clubs and hostels is often cheap and inadequate, and in hospitals there is a grave shortage of drugs and the necessary foods. The achievement is less significant than the aspiration. At any rate, the Bolsheviks recognize the need and are trying to satisfy it, whereas it must be owned that some capitalist countries have scarcely reached the point of recognizing that the need exists, and most protest that it is financially impracticable to meet it. And in this contrast lies much of the strength of the *régime*.

The Russian worker supports his present hardships with such patience because he believes that genuine efforts are being made to give him a fuller and happier existence. He

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lives, not in an Utopia—far from it—but, as Adam Smith might have put it, in “the project” of an Utopia. He looks forward to a future happiness which he hopes to enjoy, and he remembers that in the old days the Church only offered him the prospect of happiness when he was dead.

CHAPTER SEVEN

VARIOUS CONCLUSIONS

WHAT is to be the upshot of this gigantic experiment? Once more, I can only give a personal impression, strengthened by the opinion of numbers of people with whom I talked in Russia, some sympathetic with Bolshevism, some hostile, all critical. I was surprised to find among them so large a measure of agreement, for almost all described the present state of affairs as chaotic, yet almost all believed that somehow or other, in some form or other, the present *régime* would muddle through. That the Russia we shall see in twenty years time will be very different from the Russia we see to-day was taken for granted by everyone.

For fourteen years Bolshevism has swung

like a pendulum. In the first flush of its triumph it plunged the country into an economic anarchy, which, by Lenin's own admission, was more responsible even than war or blockade for the horrors of the famine years. Famine drove Lenin into the New Economic Policy, a step backward into private enterprise which brought immediate relief. The Five Year Plan, which superseded the New Economic Policy, marked a resumed advance; but this, too, has been brought to a standstill by disorganization and the shortage of food.

At the moment, rigid Communism has again relaxed its grip, and private trading is being not only tolerated but even encouraged, in the hope that it may ease the situation. Every town that I visited had its open markets, where you could make, at a price, a range of purchases from melons to second-hand clothes. In the larger cities, little markets appear to spring up, almost casually, along the pavements; and such is the keen-

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ness to buy, that if you visit one of these carrying a parcel, you will be accosted by several optimistic people, anxious to know if you have anything to sell them.

Nevertheless, the essential purpose has never been, and is not now, abandoned. The policy may be interrupted, but it always goes on again. All that is allowed is a breathing-space, a period of rest before the fresh offensive.

In making these tremendous and sometimes catastrophic onslaughts, Bolshevism commands advantages which will not escape the notice of even the most casual of visitors —the bigness of Russia, her amazing resources, her vast population. The human material, though raw, is remarkably docile, and has apparently inexhaustible powers of endurance. Someone in Leningrad told me that he had two friends, one a Russian and the other a Belgian. Both were big, healthy men. They came to dine with him one night, and a few days later both were arrested on

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some charge by the G.P.U., and sent to the same prison. They stayed there for the same period, living on the same fare ; but while the Belgian emerged a living skeleton, the appearance of the Russian was almost unchanged.

It seems that the Russian can survive famine and hardship which would exterminate the peoples of Western Europe. He is tough. He is also incredibly good-tempered. When I was travelling down the Volga, I was greatly struck by the crowds which stormed the ship in every port at which we touched. Dirty and ragged, they swarmed against the barriers, and pushed and fought their way along the gang-plank. They carried great burdens on their backs, and their arms were generally full of babies, watermelons, loaves of bread, or capfuls of eggs. They bumped into each other violently with their loads, and were flung back and hustled by officials ; but, in circumstances which would have turned an ordinary crowd into

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a fighting mob, I never saw a single man lose his temper.

It is surely this placidity, combined with toughness, which has made the Russian peasant the most admirable material for exploitation —by Tsar, landowner, capitalist, or Kommissar. He has, of course, his breaking-point, as when authority tried to drive him too precipitately into a collective farm. When he reaches this point, he revolts, and commits brutal outrages; but as he has no power of organization, he is subdued without much difficulty; and the only serious danger to the Government proceeds from the natural reluctance of the Red Army, composed almost entirely of peasants, to coerce their kith and kin. Breaking-point, however, is reached neither easily nor often. The peasant will put up with nearly everything; and, hard as is his present lot, his traditional endurance will bring him through his troubles.

Bolshevism, then, has a perfect territory

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and a perfect people for its experiments. It is protected by a propaganda which has drawn a curtain of illusion between Russia and the outside world, and even more, perhaps, by the absence of any possible alternative. I heard, in Moscow, that Stalin had his critics within the Party; and in the late autumn of last year events took place which suggested that the discontent had come to a head. But even if Stalin were dispossessed, there would be little change in the ruling shade of red. Stalin's position, in fact, is very strong. He has successfully ousted all his more dangerous rivals, who have just disappeared, or are struggling along in minor jobs. For example, when I was in Moscow, I found that Borodin, once a power in China, was merely editor of the *Moscow Daily News*. For the rest, there is as little to hope or fear from Trotsky at Prinkipo as from the White Russians at Paris. The exiles have neither unity nor resources.

In my first chapter, I emphasized the diffi-

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culties which the visitor to Russia must expect to encounter when he tries to frame coherent conclusions on what he has seen. He moves swiftly from one judgment to its opposite. At one moment he is repelled by the cult of material success, at the next he is attracted by the social enterprise; he is angered by the ruthlessness and the total suppression of any freedom of speech, movement, or thought; impressed by the purposeful energy which he sees everywhere, and by the part which the younger generation is encouraged to play. Humbug, graft and window-dressing have no sooner driven him towards one opinion, than the obvious progress in such matters as education and child welfare carry him towards another.

The daily, almost hourly, exasperations which are apparently inseparable from travel in Russia, the almost humorous incompetence of "Intourist", the discomfort of hotels, the unattractiveness—not to put it more strongly—of the food, the unpunctuality of

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the trains, the recurring need for the use of insecticides, may lead him into a hasty belief that a country which can be so inefficient in the little things of life cannot possibly be efficient in the big things. But that is a rash opinion, which, in his calmer moments, he will wisely reject.

I left Russia convinced that what is happening there is momentous not merely to Russia but to Western civilization, and that the practical application of the Communist philosophy is the most pregnant event in history since the French Revolution. In true perspective the Five Year Plan shrinks into a relative insignificance, an experiment, half failure and half success, to be followed by other experiments. What signifies is that Communism marches on.

Hear ye not the hum
Of mighty workings?
Listen awhile, ye nations, and be dumb.

Therefore the first general conclusion that I reached can be briefly stated. It is that

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we, in this country, have not devoted nearly enough attention to the philosophy of Communism. This is not a matter of a single book, but of a whole school of thought, which has grown up during the last half-century, has captured Russia and an important section of the intelligentsia of Germany, and has been largely ignored in England. Yet it is not a question which affects Russia or Germany exclusively, but one that affects us all.

Prophecy is proverbially dangerous ; but I am certain that, within the next twenty years, this country will have to meet the impact of a militant Communism : not, of course, precisely in the form in which it has attacked Russia, but in essentials the same creed with the same purpose. And what is going to happen ? In Russia, the capitalist system was swept away in a few months. What of the vastly more complex economy of Great Britain ? In Russia, the Holy Orthodox Church has crumbled to pieces under

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the hammer-blows of atheism. How will the Church of England, similarly State-established, meet the shock when its prop has become a battering-ram?

These are not airy speculations, but practical questions ; and it is no answer to them to point out that conditions in Great Britain are very different from those in Russia before the Revolution. The Communist offensive will readily adapt itself to geography.

My second conclusion is in the nature of a warning—necessary to myself, if presumptuous to other visitors. It concerns the danger of being overborne by the economist. The visitor sees factories, collective farms, workers' settlements, dams, sanatoria, and so forth, and by their excellence or deficiencies he is inclined to make up his private balance-sheet. This, however, like some other balance-sheets, tells less than half the truth. That it makes no allowance for the capital and human energy squandered in ill-starred experiments is the least of its omissions,

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though it would be interesting to see a fair profit and loss account for some of the major enterprises of Bolshevism.

It is of greater moment that the visitor should ask himself how these things have been achieved ; to count the cost, not in pounds or roubles, but in human suffering, and in the depreciation of spiritual values. These are imponderables which the peripatetic Socialist frequently ignores. He sees a collective farm ; he does not see the 5,000,000 *kulaks* who have been robbed and expatriated. He approves, if he is an atheist, the prohibition of religious teaching for the young, and the decline of clerical influence ; and, being a humanitarian, he prefers to dwell as lightly as possible on the procedure by which thousands of priests have been shot or sent to lumber camps, thousands of churches have been destroyed or secularized through a barely concealed coercion, and millions of Christians have been placed under a social and economic ban.

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It is essential to reject the purely material standard. Man cannot live by economics alone, nor may he determine a spiritual issue in a commercial court. The success of the Five Year Plan would not have justified Bolshevism, any more than a partial failure can be taken as condemnation. The Christian, in particular, must find his verdict under another code and by evidence of a different kind.

Yet when he has found his verdict, something more is necessary. I returned from Russia with a conviction that at present we are treating the whole question in the wrong way; and this book will have failed altogether in its purpose if it appears to encourage either a complacent contemplation of the blunders of Bolshevism, or a blind hostility to everything that the Bolsheviks are doing or trying to do.

The philosopher Solovyev once said that, to defeat what is false in Socialism, it is necessary to recognize what is true in it.

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Corruptio optimi pessima. That is, to the Christian, beyond dispute. But it would be absurd to suppose that Bolshevism, if it were the altogether evil thing depicted by its enemies, could have maintained itself for fifteen years, and could command to-day the assent and enthusiasm of decent and intelligent people, both inside and outside Russia.

John Stuart Mill once wrote that one man with an idea was worth ninety-and-nine men who had only interests. The Communists have an idea; we may dislike it, but may not deny its existence. So far, Western Europe has set little against that idea but interests; that is why it is so great a change to go from a country of disillusioned people, conscious of social and economic ills, but painfully ignorant of their remedy, to a country with a conviction and the driving force which a conviction gives.

We may say that Communism, by rejecting God, or, rather, by substituting for Him a Social Collectivity, has severed itself from

the spiritual forces which alone, in the end, can regenerate the sons of men—the forces which would have preserved it from the brutalities and contradictions into which it has fallen. But we need not be materialists if we sympathize with the Communist's determination to resist the exploitation of man by man, and to redress the inequalities of the capitalist state ; or if we find in this exploitation and these inequalities a reproach to the Christian record and a challenge to our Christianity. In his interesting little book, *The Russian Revolution*, Berdyaev points out, that "Communism should have a very special significance for Christians, for it is a reminder and denouncement of an unfulfilled duty, of the fact that the Christian ideal has not been achieved".

We may learn less perhaps from the achievements of Bolshevism than from its aspirations ; the important point is that we should open our minds and be ready to learn. Nothing could be more futile than to hope to

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oppose this new force by war, by blockade, by ostracism, by some sort of *cordon sanitaire*. We can oppose it only by rallying against it a spiritual energy more powerful than that which now controls Russia; by confessing our own shortcomings in the past, and by adopting and utilizing much of the regenerative economy of Bolshevism, while rejecting the philosophy by which that economy seeks to justify itself.

Let it be recognized that Christianity is facing the gravest menace since Islam came out of the desert in the seventh century; and that to face it with a prospect—indeed a certainty—of success, it is imperative that we should set about constructing an entirely new relation between religion and the social and economic problems of our time. By contrast with this necessity, the questions which at present distract Western Christendom sink into relative insignificance. Is it impossible to mobilize for this purpose the religious forces of the world, or even of this

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country? Cannot the Church emerge from the shadows and resume its duty as the Social Conscience? Cannot we ourselves agree to meet revolution, not by counter-revolution, but by a new revolution within us? Only the social justice of our Lord can conquer the "social justice" of Karl Marx; for the true answer to *Das Kapital* is contained in the Sermon on the Mount.

THE END